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M. B. Smith's Room

A
Modest Apology
FOR
PRIESTCRAFT,

As now commonly practised among
the GENTILES.

WITH
A small DISSERTATION con-
cerning *Jure Divino*, Tests, Creeds,
and Confessions of Faith.

By a CHRISTIAN.

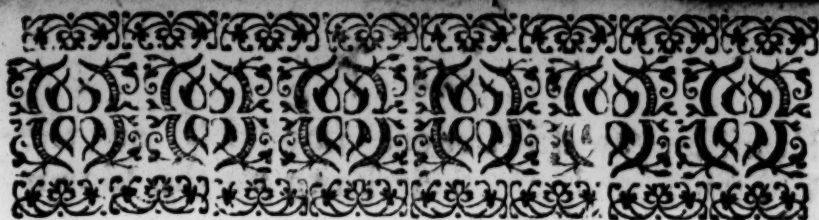
*In Nomine Domini incipit omne Malum.
Fools, Romish Creeds Implicitly Receive.
And not in Jesus, but the Priest Believe.*

L O N D O N:

Printed, and Sold by A. MOORE, near
St. Paul's. 1720.

(Price Six-pence.)





A

Modest Apology

F O R

P R I E S T C R A F T.



IT is an old Proverb, *when the Steed's stoln shut the Stable-door*; thus those Laity who have had their Consciences beguil'd, and Pockets pick'd, by the Tyranny of Priestcraft, begin to see what

Asses they have been to the Popish Clergy, who have made no other Use of them, than *lading heavy Burthens upon other Men's Shoulders*, which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear.

It is the Glory of a Free-born People to *stand fast in the Liberty wherewith God has made them Free*; and it is also the Shame and Dishonour of those who are such Tools to these Clergy, and Cheaters of their own Souls and

Families, as do believe implicitly on the Church ; and pin their Faith on the Gown of an Ecclesiastick.

Great Britain has the peculiar Happiness of an Excellent Constitution ; it is the Joy of all true Protestants, that we are not govern'd by the Clergy, and that it is in the Power of the Laity, to keep them under, that is, to be God's Servants, but not our Masters. It is our Glory, that we have a King who governs without Priestcraft, or the Assistance of the priestly Tribe ; and is it not surprizing that there should be any among the Laity, who should so far abandon their Senses and Reason, as to cry up Church-Authority, that is in plain *English* Priestcraft, and which in the End can only make them Slaves to the Clergy ! I hope I need not say that this is the most miserable State in the World.

Happy wilt thou be, O *Britain*, when thou dost come out of thy infant State, when thou wilt no longer be led in Levitical Leading-Strings, and when those of thee who have been in a doating Age for so many Years, shall resume their Senses, and be no longer deceived by *Egyptian* Task Masters, or Spiritual Nurses in long Petticoats.

Every Man who values his Religion and Liberty, should give a helping Hand to the downfall of Priestcraft ; which accursed Thing has often put those invaluable Blessings in the utmost Danger. Priestcraft has always been thought among the Wisest and Best Men, to be one of the greatest Plagues that a People can labour under ; and it is amazing that there should be any, who bear the Name of Protestants, that are not
struck

struck with Horrour at the Thought thereof. But it is too manifest that there are a great Number of lurking Knaves, to promote Popery, and Slavery; or Ecclesiastical Fools, who *Bow down*, that these Spiritual Tyrants *may go over them*.

Priestcraft is not used as a Bugbear, to amuse People with imaginary Fears, and groundless Jealousies; as the Word *Church* has been prostituted lately to serve such vile and low Purposes. We all know what Use has been made of it, and under this venerable Name, and the Sacerdotal Cassock, how many Murders, Blasphemies, and other Crimes, have been committed, and how often is it used to cover a Piece of Ecclesiastical Knavery; but we seem to grow wiser within these few Years, and the Cry and Noise of the C—h's Danger begins to smell of a Levitical Juggle, and honest Men begin to shun the Bawlers of it, as one would do a Person infected with the Plague.

But to return: *Priestcraft* is of a large Extent, and takes in with it Pride, Ambition, false Zeal, Persecution, Rebellion, lording it over the Consciences, as well as Purses, of the Laity: In short, the Word *Priestcraft* contains in it more than any one can imagine, for it would not only Burn our Bodies, but Damn our Souls, if they lay in its Power, or at the Mercy of a crafty Ecclesiastick.

And now after such a Description, though so short a One, will not all lend a Hand to the quenching of this Ecclesiastical Flame, which if it goes on must inevitably lay us in Ashes; and those Laity, who instead of
crushing

crushing these Vipers, are still for upholding the Popishly-affected Clergy, in their Spiritual Tyranny and Sovereignty, can be thought no less than Felons, who hope to get their Wealth out of the Ruins of their Neighbours.

But it is our Happiness, that there are some (and I wish there were more,) that seem resolved to cast off the Yoke of Priestcraft, and who are sensible they have play'd too long at *Blindman's Buff with their Senses*. How many have impoverished themselves by enriching the Clergy? Many have been reduced to Want on this Account, whilst those they have enrich'd, have roll'd about in Idleness and Luxury, disdaining to speak to them, much less to help them. How often have the Laity had these Spiritual Guides fawning about them like a Spaniel, for a Preferment or some fat Living; when they have no sooner been put in Possession of what they had been seeking after, but they grow haughtier than their Doner, and will scarce deign to speak to him, unless it be in a jeering Manner and after the Play-House Language, *no Money to be return'd after the Curtain is drawn up*.

Thus the Priests, who make Religion a meer Trade, are like the Description our Saviour gives of the *Scribes and Pharisees*, against whom he pronounces a Woe; *for they are like whited Sepulchres, which appear beautiful outward, but are within full of Dead Mens Bones and all Uncleanness; even so these also appear Righteous unto Men, but within are full of Hypocrisy and Iniquity*.

For

For my own part, I reverence a good Divine, whether in a Gown or a Cloak; and I cannot for my Heart think, that a Peice of Lawn, or a red Tippet, can make Men Holier than their Neighbours. They make a Noise indeed in the World, and bid us stand off, and say, *I am Holier than thou*, telling us also in the Words of the *Pharisees*, that *they thank God they are not as other Men*. But I must beg the Favour of their Spiritual Highnesses, to judge of Men by their Actions, and not by their Apparel: I am not for making Gods of the Lord's Ambassadors; because I cannot find in Scripture, *that there are more Gods than One*.

I believe it is owing to the Negligence of the Laity, that Priests are so bold, and so bad, and themselves so trod upon by their Black Tribe. It has been the Unhappiness of this Nation, that the common People have believed any thing a Priest has said, (and I am afraid he says more than his Prayers,) though it were ever so inconsistent; nay sometimes they have believed a Thing purely upon the Ridiculousness of it, or because it was spoken by a *Levite*; for they have thought nothing could be false, that came out of the Mouth of a Gluttonous Ecclesiastick.

The Apostle *Paul*, in his Epistle, to *Titus*, (the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of *Crete*) warns his Lordship *not to give heed to Jewish Fables, and Commandments of Men that turn from the Truth*; if this Declaration was believed in our Day, the Lord knows what would become of Creeds, Subscriptions,

scriptions, and other human Inventions, in the Worship of God.

It is no new Thing for the Tribe of *Levi* to teach for Doctrines the Commandments of Men; if there is a Sum of Money, or a good Living in View, it will not want a Doctrine to introduce it, or a Text of Scripture to back it. If we say the Scripture does not any where command, or so much as mention, an Altarpiece, nor Men to bow down to it; we are answer'd by them in the Words of St. Paul, *I et all Things be done Decently and in Order.* And though we humbly apprehend, with all due Submission to our High and Mighty Sovereigns the Clergy, that this Text of Scripture is basely misapply'd, they tell us there is no way of convincing *Hereticks*, but by sending them to the Devil for an Answer. (*More Clerici.*)

Heretick is a Name given by the high Clergy, to those who will not see with Ecclesiastical Spectacles, or blind their Eyesight with a Piece of Spiritual Crape; these being dangerous Men to the Church, are to be persecuted, and stigmatized with all the hard Names, and Curses too, that the Devil or a Priest can invent.

A late Author observes, ' that the *Tory* Priesthood in Queen *Elizabeth's* Time were ' Ignorant, Lewd and Seditious, and it must ' be said of them, that they are true to the ' Stuff still: ' And I cannot but add in the Words of another Author. ' I wish to see ' that horrid Race of Men expung'd, their ' Wolves Skins exposed, and their Shepherds ' Cloathing pull'd over their Ears.' Shall it be
ever

ever said that a Party of scandalous, wicked and profane Clergymen, who glory in being High-Church, but may be said more properly to be *Jesuits* in Masquerade: I say, shall these govern us, not only in our Estates, but our Consciences? Amazing Stupidity! That Men who pretend to be reasonable Creatures, will not see clearly their own Welfare, but make themselves Slaves to a Set of Mercenary *Levites*.

It plainly appears what they are whom we pay to *exercise Dominion over us*: What can we think of those, who refused taking the *Oaths* to the King, tho' they had taken them to King *William*, and good Queen *Anne*? These are those *Blind Guides*, who *strain at a Gnat, and swallow a Camel*. And to whom the Words of the Poet may very well be apply'd.

*And truly did our Kings consider all,
They'd never let the Clergy swear at all:
Their Politick Allegiance they'd refuse;
For Whores and Priests do never want excuse!*

From Priestcraft in General, let us turn to Particulars; and take a View of the late Controversy between the B—p of B—r and his Opposers: We shall see therein a true Emblem of Priestcraft.

We have lately seen the best Scholar and Divine that ever drew a Pen in defence of any Ecclesiastical Establishment, hated and defamed, and all the Kennels of the Town raked into for Scandal, Dirt, and detestable Reflexions to bespatter a Name that will ever

dear to all true *Britons*, and ever shine in *Eng-
lish* Annals for his seasonable and just Defence
 of the Rights and Privileges, the Liberties
 and Enjoyments of Protestant Mankind; tho'
 by the Confutations and entire Disappoint-
 ments they have met with in every Point they
 have attempted, 'tis visible he was only ap-
 pearing in defence of Truth and Liberty;
 and the unjust Calumnies spread against him,
 have not only been propagated by the vile
 menial hackney Sons of *Grubstreet*, and the
 very Dross of the *Belial Cl—y*; but Divines,
 who before were valued as Men of Letters,
 have stoop'd so low as to defile their Hands
 in this dirty Work, and have set on Fire the
 Tempers of the Rabble, to asperse and de-
 tract from him, whom they should rather have
 assisted and encouraged; inflaming the sediti-
 ous Mobb against him, crying out, *pursue, o-
vertake and divide the Spoil, so shall his Inheri-
tance be ours*: 'Tis scarce to be wondered at,
 that the Half-pay Pulpiteers, those factious
 Sons of *Levi*, should have Sounded their
 Trumpets in *Zion*, and like wicked *Ahab*,
 longed for *Naboth's* Vineyard, that they have
 beat their Pulpit Drums, and called upon a
 Set of Hearers as senseless as themselves to
 stand to their Arms in defense of what they
 call the Ch---h, which they as little care for
 as any; but have been used to a Set of Jar-
 gon, and *Hocus Pocus* Language, which al-
 ways serves their Turns, and is like a Charm
 or Enchantment, only fit to raise the Devil
 with. I say, I wonder not, that they should
 be so vigorous in opposing the *B——p* of
B—r, who has entirely blasted all their Schemes,
 and

and laid the Axe to the Root of the Tree, and hewn down some who are only fit to be cast into the Fire; 'tis not surprizing to me to find them preaching up their abstruse and incredible Doctrines (unless they could inspire the Laity with a Faith strong enough to remove Mountains) of an Apostolical Lineal Succession, and the Divine Rights of the Church (*i. e.*) their own Body Politick; for they subsist by Sounds, more than by Sense, and Darkness and Chains are the very Props of their Sacerdotal Empire: I had almost said (but with all due deference to the Crape) that in a little time they would assert the divine Right of Ignorance, and paint it forth with all due Encomiums, as the Mother of Devotion, and take away the use of the Tree of Life from the Laity, as only fit for themselves; and in the Room, *erect an Altar to the unknown God, whom some of them ignorantly worship.* Their Darling Doctrines of *Indefeasible Hereditary Right, Passive Obedience, and Non-Resistance*, have also taken up a great share of their Studies, tho' every Layman is judge how well they have kept to their Text; they themselves having as often broke through it as there are Days in the Year, and made as light of it as King *Edward* of his Coronation Oath; so we see 'tis impossible for Nature not to rebel against Principle: And I am at a Loss to imagine whether it favours more of Impiety or Simplicity, for the assuming Ecclesiasticks to believe they came down from Heaven with Mitres on their Heads, and Crosiers in their Hands, and that the Laity were created with Saddles on their Backs, and

that the Priests Office was only to get up and ride them.

How many poor deluded Souls have they opened the Gates of Heaven to, for Rebellion against a good Prince; and how many Anathemas have they thundered out, how wide have they set open the Gates of Hell against any who have defended their Religion and Liberties, and drawn the Sword of the Lord, and of *Gideon* against a bad one? Of this there are many very undeniable Instances; so that if we would take their Words for it, they have the Keys of Heaven and Hell, and are to be the only Orthodox Receivers of *Peter's Pence*, as well as the Male Heirs in a lineal Descent to *Peter's Commission* and Chair: But pity, great pity is it, that some of the Laity are so Stupid, and others so Priest-riden as to take their *Ipsè dixit*, and *Verbum Sacerdotis* for every thing they believe; that being drunk with the Drunken, and persecuting and beating their fellow Christians, (as they sometimes condescend to call us) should be one of the Marks and Characteristicks of an Ambassador of the Blessed *Jesus*, who has given us a quite different Account of the Manner of their Deportment by telling us, that the Servants of the Lord must be *meek, peaceable, full of Good Fruits, and without Hypocrisy*. 'Tis a lamentable Character affixed upon some, by no less Authority than *St. John* the Evangelist, that there were a Set of Persons in his Days who traded in the Souls of Men, *i. e.* were Soul-brokers; and though it may seem a hard Saying,

Saying, I fear we now may justly experience there is too much Truth in it to be denied: A Zeal for what some call C——h, shall justify all the Neglects of Christian Love and Charity; and sowing Discord among Brethren, shall be called defending an Establishment; but wretched must we be, when *the Blind lead the Blind, and both together tumble into a Ditch.*

I might add several other Doctrines, propagated by themselves, and for which we have only their bare Words. What can be more absurd than their asserting, that when our Rights are openly invaded, when a Prince becomes a Tyrant, and endeavours to Enslave all his Subjects, when the Constitution is broken through in every Part, that even then it shall be Damnation to oppose him, to endeavour to deliver our selves or our Posterity from *Popish* Bondage or Arbitrary Power? But it must be only when a Prince governs, that has the *Jure Divino* of the Priest to strengthen his Title, and make all his Subjects Vassals at their Command. I am sure the Law of Nature ordains the Welfare of the People to be the first Rule of Government; and that Religion never overthrows Nature, whose chief Principle consists in Self-Preservation. The Power lodged in the Crown is only a delegated Power in trust for the Safety of the People, and no *British* Prince has any other Right to the Crown, than what the Laws of the Land, and the Voice of the People give him. The Law appoints the Prince to be Supreme Governor; so that
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his Power is given him by the Law and the People ; and every one who knows any thing of the Constitution of *Great Britain* must be sensible, that our Government is a mixed limited Monarchy, divided between the King and the People, and that the King is only one Part of the Legislature ; they have assigned him the Laws he is to act by, and he is obliged to swear at his Coronation that * *he will govern by Law, and preserve unto his Subjects all their Rights, Privileges, and Franchises ;* and we are assured by *Fortescue*, Lib. 1. Chap 8. *That the Prince governs not his People by an absolute Power, but by a limited legal Power ;* by this the People have the same Title to the Enjoyment of their Liberties and Properties as the King has to his Crown. And a Chief Justice of *England* in King *Henry* the 2d's Days assures us, that in his time there was such a Crime as was then called by the Laws High Treason against the Kingdom. Hereby we plainly see that their boasted Doctrine of *Jure Divino* falls to the Ground ; for there never was, nor ever will be a King in the World who derived his Authority from God alone, Independent of the Law and the People, and any that flatter the Prince and make him superior to the Laws, contradict one of the ancient Maxims of Civil Government, which is *Lex facit Regem*.

* Stat. of Provision 25 Edward 3.

And I think it is beyond Contradiction, that as all Authority and Government proceeds Originally from the People, so they have a Power, as at the late Glorious *Revolution*, to set aside any they shall judge unfit for Government. It is a Maxim we have more than once found True, that a *Popish* Prince can never be a suitable Head of a *Protestant* People; for he is bound, by his Religion, constantly to endeavour to establish *Popery* by all the Means he can; all his Oaths taken to maintain our Constitution he is damn'd if he does not break, they are as Ropes of Sand to him; and he can have an Absolution from *Rome*, and a dispensation for every thing he doth for the Good, Safety and Security of the *Roman* See: And therefore he certainly will endeavour to destroy his People and subject them entirely to his Arbitrary Will and Pleasure

Thus we may plainly see that *Passive* Obedience and Hereditary Right are *Popish* Inconsistent Doctrines, opposite entirely to Self-Preservation, contradictory in themselves, and that the Clergy have as often broke thro' their darling Doctrine of *Passive Obedience* as any Set of Men whatsoever: And at the late Revolution were as zealous in inviting over the then Prince of *Orange* to come with an armed Force and oblige the Lord's Anointed to withdraw from his City of *London*, and were as forward as any in vesting the Crown and Dignity on the Prince and Princess of *Orange*, whom they soon after voted King and Queen of *England*; which
was

was an undeniable sign of their Loyalty and Passive Obedience to a King they had so often sworn to, and often preached up Damnation to any who should resist him.

I never wonder'd that any who are for making their Kings above the Law, are for setting up themselves above the King, and preaching up to the People the Divine Right of B——ps, A——ps, Conv——tions. If they plead a Right by the Laws, I readily agree with them; for our own Historians Record that *Lucius*, the first Christian King of *Britain*, instituted Three Archbishopricks, and Twenty-Five Bishopricks, instead of Three Arch-Flamens, and Twenty-Five Flamens, changing their Sees into Bishopricks; all the Archbishops, Bishops and Clergy of *England*, in the Institution of a Christian Man dedicated by them to King *Henry the 8th*, fo. 59, and 60. say, *That 'tis beyond all Doubt that the Order of Bishops was devised by the Ancient Fathers of the primitive Church, for the Conservation of good Order, and that by the Consent and Sufferance of the Prince, and Civil Power: And Bishop Hooper said, that Archbishops were first constituted in the Days of Constantine the Great; and Archbishop Whitgift says, that Archbishops are neither of Divine or Apostolical, but human Institution, and since the Apostles Time.* And 'tis very remarkable that as Angels are said to be *Ministring Spirits sent to Minister to the Heirs of Salvation*; so the Angels or Messengers of the Church of God, whose Conversations and Affections ought wholly to fix'd on Heaven and heavenly Things,

Things, have no need of Palaces, Mannors, Lordships, &c. to recommend them to the People. The Angels, or Ministers of the Churches in *Asia*, had no such Temporalities as their Successors now claim and enjoy, and so eagerly contend for; and several ancient Writers record, that when the Emperor *Constantine* the Great endowed the Bishops, the Church, and Clergy, with Temporal Laws and Possessions, the Voice of an Angel was heard in the Air, crying out, *hodie Venenum infunditur in Ecclesia*; and in those Days it became a common Proverb, *Ecclesia Peperit Divitias, & Filia Deveravit Matrem*; and I wish I could say, we do not often find where there is the greatest Wealth and Temporal Possessions, there is the greatest want of Religion, Charity, and Piety.

Far be it from me to debase the Order, or to write any Thing to lessen the Esteem all true *Britons* ought to have for some now in the Church, who are a Glory and a Defence to it, are the true Defenders of the Protestant Religion, and an Honour to the Establishment, who are Guardians of the Rights and Privileges of the Subjects, and of universal Charity to those who differ from them in Circumstantials; may they ever shine as Stars in the Firmament, and hereafter reap Immortal Crowns for the generous Opposition they have made against Imposition, and all other Doctrines which are only propagated by Men who pretend to be Ambassadors of Christ, and pretend to love God by hating their

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Brethren ; and who, instead of *Feeding those Flocks, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them Overseers*, are for fleecing them, and leaving them to be devoured, giving them over to the Devil, that they *may learn no more to Blaspheme*, as they charitably term denying any Thing they see fit to have them Believe.

The Spirit of Persecution ever was and ever will be contrary to the whole Tenor and Doctrine of the Gospel, and I always was inclined to believe a Man's Actions rather than his Words : Some of the Inferior Clergy always were (for Ends peculiar to themselves) for promoting Strife and Persecution : He that calls me a Heretick, Schismatick, &c. persecutes me as much in Fact, as he that excommunicates me, and divests me of Church Communion ; and was he to be my Judge, I doubt not but I should suffer the utmost Severity.

I am sorry I am obliged here to take Notice of the Source and Origin of all our Mischiefs and Misfortunes, those polluted corrupted Fountains, from whence all our Evils proceed, I mean the U——s, not that I am an Enemy to good Literature and Education, for he must be savage and ignorant indeed, who is an Enemy to Knowledge and solid Learning ; but I am for an entire and compleat Reformation of all our Seminaries. The Purification of the U——s is of such Importance to the Nation that the Hinges of our Government depend upon it,

it, and the wisest of our Princes have and ought always to take this Matter into their own peculiar Inspection, and Regard; there are many Laws and Statutes now in both our U——s, but particularly in the Colleges and Halls in Ox——d, which are diametrically contrary to our Constitution, and to many Acts of Parliament made for the Security of the Civil Government: The U——s, sending into the Nation every Year such a prodigious Number of Priests, educated in all the Doctrines of Bigotry and Slavery, must needs have a very great Influence on the superstitious Laity. What may not the more sober loyal Part of the Nation hope for from a Royal Visitation? Why may not Ox——d have need of one as well as *Aberdeen*? And upon due Examination I am sure it would be found that a proud, popish, persecuting, bigoted, Party Spirit prevails entirely there, instead of a free generous and sociable Temper; and that Loyalty which ought to be propagated in those Colleges and Schools, which enjoy all the Benefits that can arise from the powerful Protection and Encouragement of a Protestant Prince, whom they have all sworn Allegiance to, and are bound by all the strictest Ties of Honour and Loyalty to defend and obey. It is too well known to be disputed, that some of the Decrees of the U——s of Ox——d, have been burnt by Order of the House of Peers, by the Hands of the common Hangman, as tending to destroy the Rights of the Subjects, contrary to the Principles of Civil Government, and the Dictates

of humane Reason; and how often have his Majesty and the Royal Family been treated with all the Marks of Disgrace and Contempt; how have the Laws made in Defence of the publick Peace, been there trampled upon and despised; how often has the Impostor's Health been publicly tolerated to be roasted in the U—y, with Impunity and Protection, and all the Friends of the Government discouraged and prosecuted? And I am perswaded no true *Briton* will have any regard for the many Protestations of Loyalty they can make, unless they see a manifest Reformation in them, a humble Repentance, and due Submission to the best of Kings. Sedition there, has been made meritorious; and 'twas no Matter for Christianity, so long as some of their Members profess'd a Zeal for the C—h, by Rebellion against their Sovereign. The Muses Residences have been Seats of Treason; and the ignorant Populace have had the most contradictory Stories affirm'd to them as Truth; and how forward some of their Members were to countenance and encourage the late unnatural Rebellion, is too fresh in every one's Mind to need any Repetition. 'Tis no Wonder if the Fountains are so polluted, the Streams are muddy; for how have our Pulpits groan'd with elaborate *Billinggate*? Every upstart Priest has turn'd Politician, and settled the Rights of Princes, contrary to the unanimous Consent and Acts of the Legislature; and sad Work have they always made of it every

every one knows; for 'tis a stated Maxim, that the more Influence the C—y have on the Civil Power, the worse it is both for Prince and People; they have always been found the most bloody and imperious, and their Councils have always tended to the Destruction of Society, of the Civil Rights of Mankind. They brought all the Miseries in King *Charles* the 1st's Reign, they stimulated and encouraged King *James* the 2^d to enslave his People; and to them, 'tis we owe all the Miseries which were like to come upon us, in a late most pious Reign, had not God Almighty interven'd by the peaceable Accession of his Majesty King *George* to the Crown: Their Disaffection to his Succession was notorious, and their Loyalty to his Government has since many times been manifested all over the Kingdom; for it was always their Way to preach up the Security of the C—h in a bad Reign, and its Danger in a good One. How can we expect any other Doctrine from them? They are poysoned at the College, having been bred up with an utter Aversion to the Liberties of Mankind, and have nothing left to make themselves considerable at their first Appearance, but arraigning the best Constitution

stitution in the World, and becoming the seditious Trumpeters of a factious Party. The Oaths they have taken to the King, are accounted by them as not binding; nay they count it a Piece of Loyalty to break them, and insolently fly in the Face of all Civil Government, by praying for the King as supreme Head of the Church, before their Sermons, and in them setting themselves above their Sovereign, arraigning his Title, his Ministry, and his Actions, and by vile Innuendos asserting the Right of a pusillanimous Impostor, whom no Prince dares own, and none dare protect, but him whom Almighty Vengeance *has threatened to destroy by the Breath of his Nostrils, and the Brightness of his coming.* How contradictory is it to pray for the King, as supreme Head of the Church, and yet maintain that Priests only can deprive one another! That all Lay Deprivation is invalid; to be so very liberal of Damnation, as to fix it upon every one who cannot believe and think just as they do; to forget all Christian Love and Charity, and thunder out their Anathema's against all that cannot, or will not see with their Eyes: So that out of the very same Mouth, and at the same

same Time, proceeds both Blessing and
Cursing

'Tis certain that Christ has an Universal Catholick Church, tho' scatter'd thro' distant Parts of the World; and tho' this Church is distinguished by different Names and Characters, yet the Apostle hath assured us, that *he that fears God and worketh Righteousness is accepted, let him be of any Nation, Sect or Perswasion*, either established by legal Authority or otherwise: A mutual Forbearance of one another, and a general Love and Charity to all, is a Doctrine very much recommended both by the Example of our Saviour, and his Apostles. Primitive Christianity never consisted in Persecution for Christ's Sake.

Here I am led to give a few short Hints concerning Creeds, Tests, and other such like Standards of Orthodoxy, which were according to all the Church Histories now extant, found to be contrary to the Honour of God, and the Bent of the Gospel; and those who were most zealous in Defence of them, were always for setting up themselves, as Christ's Vicegerents: They never considered their own Fallibility as Men, and how easily
they

they might be imposed upon. I am sure that there never was, nor ever can be any Medium between private Judgment, and an infallible Head; if the former is allowed, all Creeds fall to the Ground; and if the latter is agreed to, I do not understand what we mean by our Profession of being Protestants: It has been often found, that those Men, who have been the most forward to promote Creeds, have the least understood those Doctrines they have so vehemently endeavour'd to propagate with such Violence and Priestly Rage.

Indeed I am sensible the *Roman Church* have had their Ends in promoting them, their chief Intention being by such unintelligible Forms of Words, to lead their Votaries blindfold, and so to impose upon their Senses, and endeavour to make them believe whatsoever was affirm'd to be Orthodox by their Guides, whether they understood it or no. Creeds are a manifest Injury to God Almighty, as tending to overthrow Divine Revelation, and in the Room thereof to substitute humane Interpretations, to make the Scripture not a sufficient Rule of Faith and Salvation. I never knew them of any Benefit; indeed they always serv'd
to

to raise the Ambition of Ecclesiasticks, to debase the Reason and Understanding of the Laity, and to render those over-credulous Fools, who believ'd them, as stupidly ignorant and insensible as those who made and contriv'd them: They often served to command Things to be believ'd impossible in themselves, and often contradictory to Christianity; and those who could not acknowledge and subscribe them, were according to their usual Charity excommunicated in this World, and damn'd in the next. God, the Author of our Beings, who form'd us like to himself, has given us Abilities to judge for our selves, and we are not to be sav'd by the Faith of another: Creeds often tended to the Destruction of the Unity of Christians, and the Peace of the Church; they were often the Result of Heat, and commonly propagated by Ecclesiastical Fury. Priests ever introduced them into the Church, without any regard to Orthodoxy, only to support their own Authority and Ambition; they never were to be depended upon, for the Propagators of them were commonly Men of no Learning or Temper; a fiery Zeal attoned for all Christian Qualifications, and they usually were for calling for Fire from Heaven to consume

all such Hereticks as did not, or could believe their Contradictions and Absurdities: 'Tis plain they always hinder'd the Progress of Christianity, and were ever thought most useful in times of Ignorance and Idolatry. The Religious Liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, was always by them dethroned and invaded, and they always tended to introduce a slavish Obedience, which neither we nor our Fathers could bear.

I am of Opinion, that as every Man has a Right, as much as possible, to protect and preserve his Civil Rights and Enjoyments, so he has an equal Privilege to protect his Understanding and his Conscience from all Invasions, which may subject him to the Mercy of such Priests, as only delight in triumphing over the Weak and over Credulous, and rejoyce in the introducing Spiritual Tyranny, and Slavery; which are contrary to the gracious Designs of Providence, who always intends the Welfare and Happiness of Mankind. I must confess I ever had a natural Aversion to all Kinds of Imposition; I expected to be sav'd by my own Faith, never desir'd to see with the Eyes of another, and always was unwilling to pin my Faith on the Sleeve even of an A—
of

of C——y. I thought always 'twas the highest Degree of Arrogancy for any to pretend to be Judges for me in Spiritual Matters ; and therefore desired to examine for my self, as I was likely (according to all the strictest Enquiries I ever was able to make) to suffer and be condemned for my own Errors.

Thus I have briefly stated my Opinion concerning Creeds and Creed-Makers : That Creeds were usher'd into the World by some bigotted, superstitious *Levites*, who lov'd to lord it over God's Heritage, and lay equal Burthens on the Consciences, as on the Backs of the Laity. They were always, by all understanding Men, counted dark obscure Forms of Words, fit only to be used in Times of Ignorance, when God is said to wink at our Defects, and always were and will be a Spiritual Invasion on the Religious Liberties of Mankind. Their Makers were usually found a Set of furious unintelligent Mortals, who used to form and promote them with the same Zeal and Understanding as the *Indians* do their Prayers to the Devil.

To conclude, I cannot forbear congratulating my Countrymen upon the glorious

Spirit of Liberty, which seems to be breaking out all over the Nation : The general Contempt the more sensible Part have against slavish Principles, and the generous Concern they have to transmit to their Posterity, unpolluted and undefiled, their Civil Rights and Religious Liberties should be Matters of Joy to every *Briton*.

I always was an Enemy to the encroaching Power of the Priests ; they usually made good Things bad, and bad worse, and are the greatest Manglers of a Constitution in the World ; their Interests being often contrary to that of the State. Having now without any regard to Party, asserted what I think is and should be the Sentiments of all who profess and understand Protestant Principles, and enjoy the Blessings of a Protestant Government ; I leave this Essay to be canvass'd by all those narrow Spirits who can swallow down every Thing the Priests command them to believe, without any Regard to Truth. I would have them rouse up their Senses, and be no longer led blindfold by Men who first lead them out of the way, and then laugh at their Simplicity and senseless Credulity. *Jacob* said, in his last Blessing to his Sons, concerning the Tribe of *Levi*, that they were Instruments of Cruelty,

elty, and their bad Descendants and Pro-
 geny have ever since that Time fulfilled
 his Prophecy of them. O the prodigious
 Effects of Priest-craft ! O my Soul come
*not thou into their Secret ; unto their Assem-
 bly, mine Honour be not thou united : Cursed
 be their Anger for it is fierce, and their Wrath
 for it is cruel : I will divide them in Jacob,
 and scatter them in Israel.*

F I N I S.



and had I desired
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 bly, mine Honour be not united to theirs
 be their danger for it is mine and their
 for it is mine: I will not be like them in Jacob,
 and I will not be like them in Israel.

T. W. 2.



